

This paper gives an up to date review of the health risks and complains of air pollution with focus on selected studies done in Norway and in Czech Republic on the topic. Air pollution consists of many different components including particulate matter, nitrogen dioxide and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAH).

It is well known that with rapid industrialization, urbanization and migration, particularly in the developing world, there is a general deterioration of environmental conditions. In addition to inadequate housing, sanitation, poor water supply and malnutrition populations have been exposed to raising levels of air pollution. Despite the vast improvements in health globally over the past several decades, environmental factors remain a major cause of sickness and death in many regions of the world.

The health effects caused by air pollutants may range from subtle biochemical and physiological changes to difficulty in breathing, wheezing, coughing and aggravation of existing respiratory and cardiac conditions. These effects can result in increased medication use, increased doctor or emergency room visits, more hospital admissions and premature death. The human health effects of poor air quality are far reaching, but principally affect the body's respiratory system and the cardiovascular system. Individual reactions to air pollutants depend on the type of pollutant a person is exposed to, the degree of exposure, the individual's health status and genetics.